

Sabine's Gull  
20 Oct 1988  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
\*S. Dinsmore, \*Myers  
IBL 59:14, 77, Dinsmore 1989

Record Number: 88-30  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore  
Robert K. Myers

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:14  
Records Committee: IBL 59:77  
Dinsmore, S. J. 1989. Sabine's Gull at Saylorville Reservoir.  
IBL 59:62.

VOTE: 6-A-D, 1-abstain

A-D. Diagnostic wing pattern seen by both observers.

A-D. Good details that describe Sabine's Gull very well.

Additional drawing by Myers excellent. I did not have sketch as described in Dinsmore documentation.

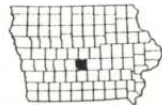
SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Bob Myers, RR 2, Box 153, Perry, IA 50220 [3/29/89]

## LITERATURE CITED

- Anderson, R. M. 1907. The birds of Iowa. Proc. Davenport Acad. Sci. 11:125-417.  
Bartsch, P. 1922. An inland record of the Man-o'-war-bird. Auk 39:249-250.  
Briggs, S. 1969. Some notes on an early Iowa record and Paul Bartsch. Iowa Bird Life 39:85-87.  
Coale, H. K. 1910. A new bird for Illinois. Auk 27:75.  
DuMont, P. A. 1933. A Revised List of the Birds of Iowa. Iowa City: University of Iowa Studies in Natural History, Vol. 15, No. 5.  
Harrison, P. 1983. Seabirds an Identification Guide. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.  
Hodges, J. 1949. Notes on the bird life in the Mississippi Valley. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 56:343-345.  
Peck, M. E. 1896. Note. Iowa Ornithologist 2:34.  
Synder, D. E. 1961. First record of the Least Frigate-bird (*Fregata ariel*) in North America. Auk 78:265.

## SABINE'S GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



At 4:05 p.m. on 20 October 1988, I noticed a small, brown-mantled gull resting with other gulls on a large mud bar north of the Jester Park area of Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. Initially, the bird looked like a small, first-winter Franklin's Gull; however, after studying the bird for several minutes, I concluded that the bird must be a juvenile Sabine's Gull. Bob Myers joined me at about 5:15 p.m., and we watched the bird until 5:50 p.m.

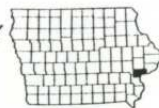
The bird remained resting on the mud bar until about 4:25 p.m., when it flew. In flight, the striking wing pattern was obvious. The outer primaries were black, forming a triangle from the bend of the wing outward. The inner wing, out to a line from the bend of the wing to the tip of the inner most secondary, was brown. The rest of the wing was white. In flight, the tail was slightly forked and was white except for a black terminal band. When perched, the upperparts, crown, and nape were light brown. The wings were darker than the rest of the upperparts. The underparts and forehead were white. The legs were black. The bill was also black and was shorter and thicker than the bill of a Franklin's Gull. The wing pattern and gray-brown crown, nape, and upperparts identified the bird as a juvenile Sabine's Gull.

This is the sixth record of a Sabine's Gull in Iowa. There are three old records and three recent ones, all from fall. The other recent records are both from Saylorville Reservoir: 10-24 November 1983 (Kent, T. H. 1983. Sabine's Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 53: 105-106) and 5 October 1986 (*IBL* 57: 17, 78).

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

## TOWNSEND'S WARBLER IN MUSCATINE COUNTY

GERALD WHITE



On 12 May 1988, I was taking an early morning birding walk in Wild Cat Den State Park. At 7:20 a.m., I was in an area of the woods that had an edge transition zone, when a small bird flew out of heavy cover and landed about 30 feet away in a small bare tree. Although the bird had its back to me, it did turn and look at me twice during its brief period of exposure. I was able to

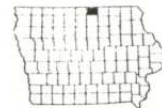
see the following features: mid-sized warbler by shape and size (about 5 inches long); black crown; back and rump had the base color of dark olive with black spots that were most noticeable around the shoulder area (The spots gave the impression of streaking.); two white wing bars; dull white undertail coverts; some dark feathers in the shape of possible spots near the flank; cheek and ear covered with a good-sized patch of black surrounded with yellow (Each color had intense color saturation.); black throat; and dark and warbler-shaped bill.

I was not able to see the side or complete front of the bird; however, the features of the head and throat as illustrated in the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* were those of a male Townsend's Warbler. The black spots clinched my identification in the field. I did not realize until evening that I had seen a record bird (second for Iowa) and, regretfully, had not notified many fellow birders. A subsequent search with tape recordings on the following day failed to produce the bird again.

1505 E. 5th St., Muscatine, Iowa 52761

## VERMILION FLYCATCHER AT RICE LAKE

GERALD ANDERSON



A male Vermilion Flycatcher was found catching insects along a small creek that runs into Rice Lake in Worth County at 10:30 a.m. on 13 May 1988. It had a red breast, brown streak between the red on the top of the head and the red throat, and brown wings. It was smaller than a Cardinal. The bird repeatedly swooped down from its perch on a small tree to catch insects and returned to a perch. Curt Rector and I watched the bird for five minutes from a distance of 30 to 40 feet in bright sunlight.

RR2, Lake Mills, IA 50450

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FROM DIANE PORTER

I have some questions about Chimney Swifts that I hope *Iowa Bird Life* readers can answer for me: (1) Do Chimney Swifts roosting or nesting in chimneys create any fire hazard?; and (2) Do their droppings cause any significant inconvenience or health hazard?

Migrating Chimney Swifts return each year in flocks numbering several thousand birds to ancestral roosting places. I talked by telephone in 1987 with Chimney Swift expert Richard B. Fischer, retired Professor of Environmental Education, Cornell University. He told me that Chimney Swifts do not nest communally. The large aggregations of birds are nonbreeding individuals, those that have finished their nesting for the season, and migrating birds. In light of this information, one would not expect a buildup of nests to cause a fire hazard in the chimneys used by large flocks in migration. Also, I have heard the speculation that the birds' movements in and out of the chimneys actually help clean the chimneys and hence reduce the fire hazard.

85-30

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Sabine's Gull

How Many?1 juv.

Location?near the Jester Park area of Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?resting on large mud bar on reservoir

Date?20 Oct 1988

Time?4:05-5:50 p.m.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird:Bob Myers

Description of bird:I was scanning through hundreds of gulls that were resting on a large mud bar when I noticed a small, gray-backed gull resting with Franklin's and Bonaparte's gulls. Initially, I thought the bird was a juvenile Franklin's Gull, but it was soon apparent that the bird was too small to be a Franklin's Gull.

After watching the bird for several minutes, I concluded that the bird must be a Sabine's Gull, although I could not see the wing pattern. The bird finally flew at about 4:25 p.m., and I could clearly see the striking black-and-white wing pattern. I then notified Bob Myers and we watched the bird until 5:50 p.m. During the observation, I took the following notes.

The bird was the size of nearby Bonaparte's Gulls and was decidedly smaller than several nearby Franklin's Gulls. The legs were dark. The bill was dark and was shorter and thicker than the bill of a Franklin's Gull. When perched, the upperparts were dark grayish brown, the wings were darker than the back, and the underparts and forehead were white. In flight, the wing pattern was striking; outer primaries black, inner wing coverts brown, and inner primaries and secondaries white(see sketch). The wings were very pointed, not rounded like the wings of a Franklin's Gull. The tail was obviously forked and was white except for a black tip. I could not relocate the bird on subsequent days.

Similar species and how eliminated:The size, grayish upperparts, and striking wing pattern eliminate all other gulls.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were very good with the sun behind me and excellent light. Estimated viewing distance was 300+ yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen two other Sabine's Gulls in Iowa; November 1983 and 5 Oct 1986, both at Saylorville.

References consulted:NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made?made while watching bird

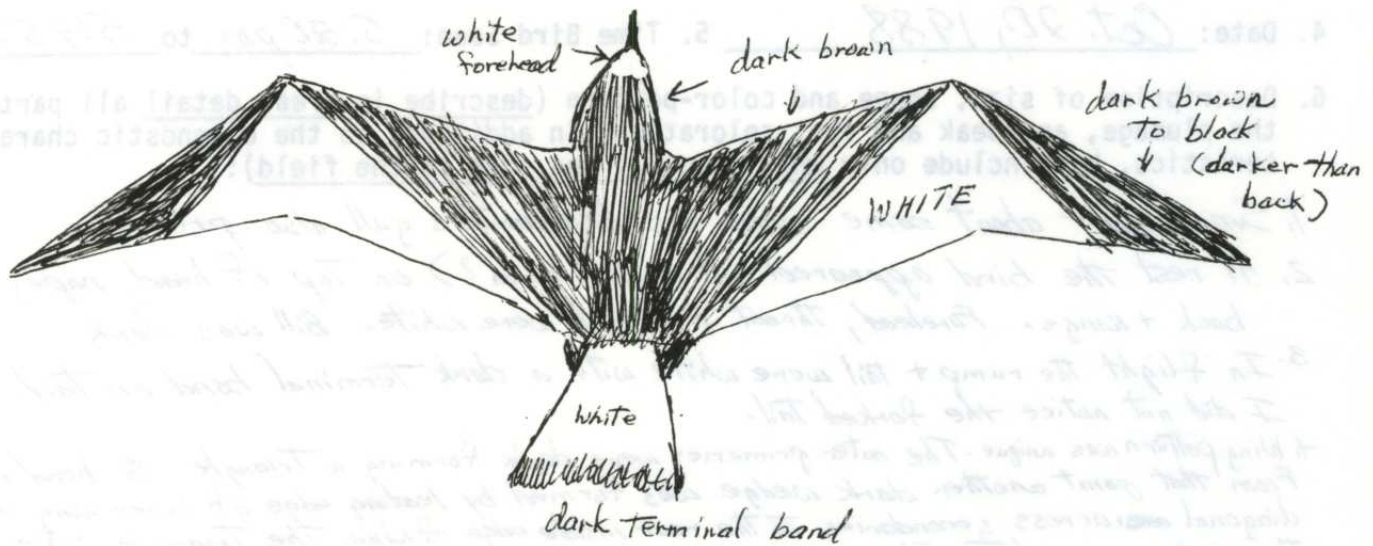
How long before this form was completed?written on 22 Oct 1988

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

88-30

1. Species Sabine's Gull - juvenile
  2. Number 1
  3. Location Saylorville Res.
  4. Date: Oct. 20, 1988
  5. Time Bird Seen: 5:20 pm to 5:45 pm
  6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
    1. Small gull - about same size as Bonaparte's gull also present.
    2. At rest the bird appeared all dark (brown?) on Top of head, nape, back + wings. Forehead, throat + breast were white. Bill was dark.
    3. In flight the rump + tail were white with a dark terminal band on tail. I did not notice the forked tail.
    4. Wing pattern was unique. The outer primaries were dark forming a triangle to bend of wing. From that point another dark wedge was formed by leading edge of inner wing and a diagonal ~~across~~ across secondaries to the rear inside edge of wing. The triangle left in the center was white. This is more easily drawn than described - see back of page.
  7. Description of voice, if heard: Not heard
  8. Description of behavior: resting on water + flying - very quick, fast and agile gull.
  9. Habitat - general: large reservoir  
specific: near Jester Park
  10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
The overall coloration and wing pattern really eliminates all other possibilities.
  11. Distance (how measured)? guess - 300 yd.
  12. Optical equipment: 20x scope
  13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
Light rain - but visibility good enough to easily recognize birds
  14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
I saw one in same plumage at Saylorville Res. several years back (incb.)
  15. Other observers: Steve Dinsmore found bird, called me and I went immediately to the lake.
  16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes.
  17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Steve Dinsmore
  18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description  
None needed
  19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? that evening
- Signature: Robert K. Myers Address: R.R. 2, Box 153  
Date: Oct. 20, 1988 City, State: Perry Iowa 51220

# Juv. Sabine's gull



Dorsal view

Date: Oct 30, 1988  
City, State: Ferry, Texas  
Address: RR 2, Box 175  
Signature: Robert J. May